

Message

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Sent: 11/4/2016 2:35:11 PM
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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips

US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs

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NWI Times - Plea for demolition funds alarms East Chicago residents

NWI Times - Officials renew push for lead testing in East Chicago

Black Lives Matter NWI Gary

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/plea-for-demolition-funds-alarms-east-chicago-residents/article_a41f5439-ed9a-58ac-b4da-85b7865a97d3.html

Plea for demolition funds alarms East Chicago residents

- Lauren Cross lauren.cross@nwi.com, 219-933-3206

EAST CHICAGO — Residents and community leaders say they are baffled by the city's recent appeal to the federal government for emergency cash to demolish the still-occupied West Calumet Housing Complex.

"It's a slap in the face," said Akeesha Daniels, 29, who is among the 1,000-plus struggling to relocate from the lead- and arsenic-contaminated site.

The city's applied to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for up to \$8 million on Oct. 27 — about a week after residents and clergy leaders met with city officials. There, clergy asked the city to appeal to FEMA to declare the EPA's Superfund site an emergency disaster area as federal officials did for lead-tainted Flint, Michigan.

"Our concern is there seems to be tremendous movement around the demolition, but there are still 300 families that don't have housing yet," said Cheryl Rivera, executive director of the Northwest Indiana Federation.

Rivera is a member of a community-led strategy group comprised of clergy, health care advocates, environmental activists and residents living in the Superfund site. She said she attended the Oct. 19 meeting with the city.

Carla Morgan, city attorney for East Chicago, said this week city officials continue to appeal to state and federal officials for additional resources but haven't been successful. She added, however, state and federal officials have already assisted in a number of ways, and the city has urged children to get tested for lead at the local health department free of charge.

"We have been able to respond to this crisis without that official declaration," Morgan said. "We're getting the resources we need."

HUD this summer gave the East Chicago Housing Authority about \$1.9 million to help permanently relocate residents. The state has kicked in \$100,000 to help with moving expenses for the most vulnerable and another \$100,000 to help fund a public health nurse and public health educator.

After a housing discrimination complaint was filed, the ECHA set aside about \$1 million to assist residents with moving costs, security deposits and application fees.

Rivera said residents still report a number of barriers with relocation, including having little moving assistance beyond a 50-mile radius. Actual moving and transportation costs can be covered up to a 50-mile radius, but beyond that, residents have been offered a lump sum and are expected to cover the rest.

Residents have been asked to find new housing before winter hits — yet landlords are reportedly turning people away with poor credit, Rivera added.

Declaring the site an emergency disaster area would secure more resources for residents in West Calumet, but also for homeowners living in the middle and eastern portion of the Superfund site, Rivera said.

"The city does not have the resources to handle this crisis. This continual Band-Aid approach isn't working," Rivera said. "We need a solution."

Sherry Hunter, a community activist who has been advocating on behalf of West Calumet and the middle section of the Calumet neighborhood, questioned the city's priorities. She also questioned the sudden urgency to demolish the complex, which was built in the early 1970s on the footprint of a former lead smelter.

"Unbelievable. So demolition comes before lives. Before women and children," Hunter said.

"What's the urgency? Why now?"

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/officials-renew-push-for-lead-testing-in-east-chicago/article_faefdcba-ae7c-519f-a2a5-6c1952f8ff3f.html

Officials renew push for lead testing in East Chicago

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EAST CHICAGO — A gap in the number of children tested for lead appears to be narrowing, but there's more work to be done, officials say.

About 300 children age 7 and younger have had their blood tested since last summer, when East Chicago's mayor notified residents of the West Calumet Housing Complex they should move because of high levels of lead and arsenic in the soil.

The complex is part of zone 1, the first of three cleanup zones in an Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site that encompasses the entire Calumet neighborhood.

Of the approximately 680 kids who lived at the complex before the relocation order was issued, 284 were younger than 7, said Matt Scotten, spokesman for the Indiana State Department of Health.

As of Thursday, 1,313 people have their blood tested for lead, including slightly more than 273 children under age 7, Scotten said. Not all of the 273 kids were from the complex, he said.

Of the children under age 7 from the complex, about 70 percent have had their blood tested for lead, according to Mark Johnson, regional director for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Johnson offered that update to the City Council at last week's meeting.

As of Thursday, confirmatory tests showed 16 children younger than 7 had elevated blood levels, he said. For adults, results above CDC's threshold for action — 5 micrograms per deciliter — are not tracked because lead does not pose to same risks for adults, as per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance, according to the state health department.

The Calumet neighborhood and former USS Lead facility to the south were added to the Superfund list in April 2009. Industrial operations at several sites in the area tied to the pollution began nearly a century ago.

ATSDR, which works with EPA to prepare public health evaluations, previously prepared two public health evaluations for the site. A 1998 report found a limited number of children in the area had elevated blood lead levels and recommended further study. Another report in 2011 has been widely criticized for relying on incomplete data and wrongly concluding the toxins in the soil no longer presented public health threats.

From 2005 to 2015, preliminary tests showed more than 20 percent of children tested in the census tract that includes the West Calumet Housing Complex had elevated blood lead levels, according to data provided by the Indiana State Department of Health. Approximately 10 percent of children in the census tract encompassing two cleanup zones to the east of the complex had elevated blood lead levels during the same time period.

Officials have said it's important for parents to get their children tested — and return to get confirmatory tests — to ensure the children receive all of the services available to them.

Children younger than 7 are particularly at risk of lead poisoning, because their growing bodies more readily absorb the heavy metal. Pregnant woman also should take precautions. Even low levels of lead in the blood can lead to lower IQ, impair a child's ability to pay attention and cause lower academic achievement, according to the CDC.

North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan said about 11,000 informational postcards went out to East Chicago households last week. His office also conducted 20,000 robocalls to households in the city.

“Our overall objective is to get 100 percent of children in East Chicago tested,” Mrvan said. “It’s free and the test can begin the medical process of reversing lead exposure.”

In cases where children have confirmed elevated blood lead levels, the CDC can offer families referrals to specialty doctors for treatment and other resources, he said.

“With this man-made disaster, we want to make sure people get tested and make sure kids are safe,” he said.

The state and local health departments are prioritizing families and children who live in the Superfund site, but any city resident can get tested, he said. Former residents of the Superfund site should consider talking to a physician or going to the Lake County Health Department, he said.

Several “one-stop shop” events are planned this month in East Chicago. In addition to blood testing, residents can obtain birth certificates, vouchers for ID cards and driver’s licenses, immunizations and help navigating the health insurance market.

Blood samples collected at the clinics will be analyzed at no cost by state health department laboratories.

The one-stop shop schedule is:

1 to 6 p.m. at Riley Park, 1005 E. Chicago Ave.

9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday at West Calumet Housing Complex recreation center, 4925 Gladiola St.

1 to 6 p.m. Nov. 18 at West Calumet Housing Complex recreation center.

9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Nov. 19 at Riley Park.

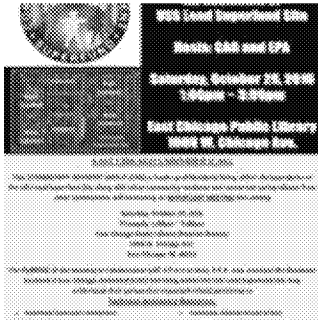
Times Staff Writer Lauren Cross contributed to this report.



Black Lives Matter NWI - Gary

October 29 at 1:07am ·

#CalumetLeadCrisis Community Advisory group & EPA rep meets today for all residents of EC superfund site. 1pm, EC library, 1008 W Chicago Ave, #EastChicago #IN



Calumet Lead Crisis Update – 28 Oct | Great Lakes Bioregionalism

The NWI Times reports that only a “limited number” of children at the West Calumet Complex have been tested for elevated lead and arsenic levels....

garyarea.wordpress.com

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Sincerely,

Steven P. Kaiser

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